ABBOTT EDWIN ABBOTT

HOW TO WRITE CLEARLY: RULES AND EXERCISES ON ENGLISH COMPOSITION

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Содержание

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PREFACE

Almost every English boy can be taught to write clearly, so far at least as clearness depends upon the arrangement of words. Force, elegance, and variety of style are more difficult to teach, and far more difficult to learn; but clear writing can be reduced to rules. To teach the art of writing clearly is the main object of these Rules and Exercises.

Ambiguity may arise, not only from bad arrangement, but also from other causes—from the misuse of single words, and from confused thought. These causes are not removable by definite rules, and therefore, though not neglected, are not prominently considered in this book. My object rather is to point out some few continually recurring causes of ambiguity, and to suggest definite remedies in each case. Speeches in Parliament, newspaper narratives and articles, and, above all, resolutions at public meetings, furnish abundant instances of obscurity arising from the monotonous neglect of some dozen simple rules.

The art of writing forcibly is, of course, a valuable acquisition—almost as valuable as the art of writing clearly. But forcible expression is not, like clear expression, a mere question of mechanism and of the manipulation of words; it is a much higher power, and implies much more.

Writing clearly does not imply thinking clearly. A man may think and reason as obscurely as Dogberry himself, but he may (though it is not probable that he will) be able to write clearly for all that. Writing clearly—so far as arrangement of words is concerned—is a mere matter of adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, and auxiliary verbs, placed and repeated according to definite rules.[1] Even obscure or illogical thought can be clearly expressed; indeed, the transparent medium of clear writing is not least beneficial when it reveals the illogical nature of the meaning beneath it.

On the other hand, if a man is to write forcibly, he must (to use a well-known illustration) describe Jerusalem as "sown with salt," not as "captured," and the Jews not as being "subdued" but as "almost exterminated" by Titus. But what does this imply? It implies knowledge, and very often a great deal of knowledge, and it implies also a vivid imagination. The writer must have eyes to see the vivid side of everything, as well as words to describe what he sees. Hence forcible writing, and of course tasteful writing also, is far less a matter of rules than is clear writing; and hence, though forcible writing is exemplified in the exercises, clear writing occupies most of the space devoted to the rules.

Boys who are studying Latin and Greek stand in especial need of help to enable them to write a long English sentence clearly. The periods of Thucydides and Cicero are not easily rendered into our idiom without some knowledge of the links that connect an English sentence.

There is scarcely any better training, rhetorical as well as logical, than the task of construing Thucydides into genuine English; but the flat, vague, long-winded Greek-English and Latin-English imposture that is often tolerated in our examinations and is allowed to pass current for genuine English, diminishes instead of increasing the power that our pupils should possess over their native language. By getting marks at school and college for construing good Greek and Latin into bad English, our pupils systematically unlearn what they may have been allowed to pick up from Milton and from Shakespeare.

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[1] Punctuation is fully discussed in most English Grammars, and is therefore referred to in this book only so far as is necessary to point out the slovenly fault of trusting too much to punctuation, and too little to arrangement.

I must acknowledge very large obligations to Professor Bain's treatise on "English Composition and Rhetoric," and also to his English Grammar. I have not always been able to agree with Professor Bain as to matters of taste; but I find it difficult to express my admiration for the systematic thoroughness and suggestiveness of his book on Composition. In particular, Professor Bain's rule on the use of "that" and "which" (see Rule 8) deserves to be better known.[2] The ambiguity produced by the confusion between these two forms of the Relative is not a mere fiction of pedants; it is practically serious. Take, for instance, the following sentence, which appeared lately in one of our ablest weekly periodicals: "There are a good many Radical members in the House *who* cannot forgive the Prime Minister for being a Christian." Twenty years hence, who is to say whether the meaning is "*and they*, i.e. *all the Radical* members in the House," or "there are a good many Radical members of the House *that* cannot &c."? Professor Bain, apparently admitting no exceptions to his useful rule, amends many sentences in a manner that seems to me intolerably harsh. Therefore, while laying due stress on the utility of the rule, I have endeavoured to point out and explain the exceptions.

The rules are stated as briefly as possible, and are intended not so much for use by themselves as for reference while the pupil is working at the exercises. Consequently, there is no attempt to prove the rules by accumulations of examples. The few examples that are given, are given not to prove, but to illustrate the rules. The exercises are intended to be written out and revised, as exercises usually are; but they may also be used for *vivâ voce* instruction. The books being shut, the pupils, with their written exercises before them, may be questioned as to the reasons for the several alterations they have made. Experienced teachers will not require any explanation of the arrangement or rather non-arrangement of the exercises. They have been purposely mixed together unclassified to prevent the pupil from relying upon anything but his own common sense and industry, to show him what is the fault in each case, and how it is to be amended. Besides references to the rules, notes are attached to each sentence, so that the exercises ought not to present any difficulty to a painstaking boy of twelve or thirteen, provided he has first been fairly trained in English grammar.

The "Continuous Extracts" present rather more difficulty, and are intended for boys somewhat older than those for whom the Exercises are intended. The attempt to modernize, and clarify, so to speak, the style of Burnet, Clarendon, and Bishop Butler,[3] may appear ambitious, and perhaps requires some explanation. My object has, of course, not been to *improve upon* the style of these authors, but to show how their meaning might be expressed more clearly in modern English. The charm of the style is necessarily lost, but if the loss is recognized both by teacher and pupil, there is nothing, in my opinion, to counterbalance the obvious utility of such exercises. Professor Bain speaks to the same effect:[4] "For an English exercise, the matter should in some way or other be supplied, and the pupil disciplined in giving it expression. I know of no better method than to prescribe passages containing good matter, but in some respects imperfectly worded, to be amended according to the laws and the proprieties of style. Our older writers might be extensively, though not exclusively, drawn upon for this purpose."

To some of the friends whose help has been already acknowledged in "English Lessons for English People," I am indebted for further help in revising these pages. I desire to express especial obligations to the Rev. J. H. Lupton, late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and Second Master of St. Paul's School, for copious and valuable suggestions; also to several of my colleagues at the City of London School, among whom I must mention in particular the Rev. A. R. Vardy, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.

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[2] Before meeting with Professor Bain's rule, I had shown that the difference between the Relatives is generally observed by Shakespeare. See "Shakespearian Grammar," paragraph 259.

[3] Sir Archibald Alison stands on a very different footing. The extracts from this author are intended to exhibit the dangers of verbosity and exaggeration.

[4] "English Composition and Rhetoric," p. vii.

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Before electrotyping the Fourth and Revised Edition, I wish to say one word as to the manner in which this book has been used by my highest class, as a collection of Rules for reference in their construing lessons. In construing, from Thucydides especially, I have found Rules 5, 30, 34, 36, 37, and 40_a_, of great use. The rules about Metaphor and Climax have also been useful in correcting faults of taste in their Latin and Greek compositions. I have hopes that, used in this way, this little book may be of service to the highest as well as to the middle classes of our schools.

INDEX OF RULES

I. CLEARNESS AND FORCE. WORDS

ORDER OF WORDS IN A SENTENCE

15. Emphatic words must stand in emphatic positions; *i.e.*, for the most part, at the beginning or the end of the sentence.

15 *a*. Unemphatic words must, as a rule, be kept from the end. Exceptions.

15 *b*. An interrogation sometimes gives emphasis.

16. The Subject, if unusually emphatic, should often be transferred from the beginning of the sentence.

17. The Object is sometimes placed before the Verb for emphasis.

18. Where several words are emphatic, make it clear which is the most emphatic. Emphasis can sometimes be given by adding an epithet, or an intensifying word.

19. Words should be as near as possible to the words with which they are grammatically connected.

20. Adverbs should be placed next to the words they are intended to qualify.

21. "Only"; the strict rule is that "only" should be placed before the word it affects.

22. When "not only" precedes "but also," see that each is followed by the same part of speech.

23. "At least," "always," and other adverbial adjuncts, sometimes produce ambiguity.

24. Nouns should be placed near the Nouns that they define.

25. Pronouns should follow the Nouns to which they refer, without the intervention of any other Noun.

26. Clauses that are grammatically connected should be kept as close together as possible. Avoid parentheses. But see 55.

27. In conditional sentences, the antecedent or "if-clauses" must be kept distinct from the consequent clauses.

28. Dependent clauses preceded by "that" should be kept distinct from those that are independent.

29. Where there are several infinitives, those that are dependent on the same word must be kept distinct from those that are not.

30. The principle of Suspense.

30 *a*. It is a violation of the principle of suspense to introduce unexpectedly at the end of a long sentence, some short and unemphatic clause beginning with (*a*) "not," (*b*) "which."

31. Suspense must not be excessive.

32. In a sentence with "if," "when," "though," &c., put the "if-clause," antecedent, or protasis, first.

33. Suspense is gained by placing a Participle or Adjective, that qualifies the Subject, before the Subject.

34. Suspensive Conjunctions, *e.g.* "either," "not only," "on the one hand," &c., add clearness.

35. Repeat the Subject, where its omission would cause obscurity or ambiguity.

36. Repeat a Preposition after an intervening Conjunction, especially if a Verb and an Object also intervene.

37. Repeat Conjunctions, Auxiliary Verbs, and Pronominal Adjectives.

37 *a*. Repeat Verbs after the Conjunctions "than," "as," &c.

38. Repeat the Subject, or some other emphatic word, or a summary of what has been said, if the sentence is so long that it is difficult to keep the thread of meaning unbroken.

39. Clearness is increased, when the beginning of the sentence prepares the way for the middle, and the middle for the end, the whole forming a kind of ascent. This ascent is called "climax."

40. When the thought is expected to ascend, but descends, feebleness, and sometimes confusion, is the result. The descent is called "bathos."

40 *a*. A new construction should not be introduced unexpectedly.

41. Antithesis adds force and often clearness.

42. Epigram.

43. Let each sentence have one, and only one, principal subject of thought. Avoid heterogeneous sentences.

44. The connection between different sentences must be kept up by Adverbs used as Conjunctions, or by means of some other connecting words at the beginning of the sentence.

45. The connection between two long sentences or paragraphs sometimes requires a short intervening sentence showing the transition of thought.

II. BREVITY

46. Metaphor is briefer than literal statement.

47. General terms are briefer, though less forcible, than particular terms.

47 *a*. A phrase may sometimes be expressed by a word.

48. Participles may often be used as brief (though sometimes ambiguous) equivalents of phrases containing Conjunctions and Verbs.

49. Participles, Adjectives, Participial Adjectives, and Nouns may be used as equivalents for phrases containing the Relative.

50. A statement may sometimes be briefly implied instead of being expressed at length.

51. Conjunctions may be omitted. Adverbs, *e.g.* "very," "so." Exaggerated epithets, *e.g.* "incalculable," "unprecedented."

51 *a*. The imperative may be used for "if &c."

52. Apposition may be used, so as to convert two sentences into one.

53. Condensation may be effected by not repeating (1) the common Subject of several Verbs; (2) the common Object of several Verbs or Prepositions.

54. Tautology. Repeating what may be implied.

55. Parenthesis maybe used with advantage to brevity. See 26.

56. Brevity often clashes with clearness. Let clearness be the first consideration.

CLEARNESS AND FORCE

Numbers in brackets refer to the Rules.

WORDS

1. Use words in their proper sense.

Write, not "His *apparent* guilt justified his friends in disowning him," but "his *evident* guilt." "Conscious" and "aware," "unnatural" and "supernatural," "transpire" and "occur," "circumstance" and "event," "reverse" and "converse," "eliminate" and "elicit," are often confused together.

This rule forbids the use of the same word in different senses. "It is in my *power* to refuse your request, and since I have *power* to do this, I may lawfully do it." Here the second "power" is used for "authority."

This rule also forbids the slovenly use of "nice," "awfully," "delicious," "glorious," &c. See (2).

2. Avoid exaggerations.

"The *boundless* plains in the heart of the empire furnished *inexhaustible* supplies of corn, that would have almost sufficed for twice the population."

Here "inexhaustible" is inconsistent with what follows. The words "unprecedented," "incalculable," "very," and "stupendous" are often used in the same loose way.

3. Avoid useless circumlocution and "fine writing."

"Her Majesty here *partook of lunch*." Write "*lunched*."

"Partook of" implies sharing, and is incorrect as well as lengthy.

So, do not use "apex" for "top," "species" for "kind," "individual" for "man," "assist" for "help," &c.

4. Be careful how you use the following words: "not … and," "any," "only," "not … or," "that."[5]

And. See below, "Or."

Any.—"I am not bound to receive *any* messenger that you send."

Does this mean *every*, or *a single*? Use "every" or "a single."

Not.—(1) "I do *not* intend to help you, because you are my enemy &c." ought to mean (2), "I intend not to help you, and my reason for not helping you is, because you are my enemy." But it is often wrongly used to mean (3), "I intend to help you, not because you are my enemy (but because you are poor, blind, &c.)." In the latter case, *not* ought to be separated from *intend*. By distinctly marking the limits to which the influence of *not* extends, the ambiguity may be removed.

Only is often used ambiguously for *alone*. "The rest help me to revenge myself; you *only* advise me to wait." This ought to mean, "you only *advise*, instead of *helping*;" but in similar sentences "you only" is often used for "you alone." But see 21.

Or.—When "or" is preceded by a negative, as "I do not want butter *or* honey," "or" ought not, strictly speaking, to be used like "and," nor like "nor." The strict use of "not … or" would be as follows:—

"You say you don't want both butter *and* honey—you want butter *or* honey; I, on the contrary, *do not want butter or honey*—I want them both."

Practically, however, this meaning is so rare, that "I don't want butter *or* honey" is regularly used for "I want neither butter nor honey." But where there is the slightest danger of ambiguity, it is desirable to use *nor*.

The same ambiguity attends "not … and." "I do not see Thomas *and* John" is commonly used for "I see neither Thomas nor John;" but it might mean, "I do not see them both—I see only one of them."

[5] *For*, at the beginning of a sentence, sometimes causes temporary doubt, while the reader is finding out whether it is used as a conjunction or preposition.

That.—The different uses of "that" produce much ambiguity, *e.g.* "I am so much surprised by this statement *that* I am desirous of resigning, *that* I scarcely know what reply to make." Here it is impossible to tell, till one has read past "resigning," whether the first "that" depends upon "so" or "statement." Write: "The statement that I am desirous of resigning surprises me so much that I scarcely know &c."

4 a. Be careful in the use of ambiguous words, e.g. "certain."

"Certain" is often used for "some," as in "Independently of his earnings, he has a *certain* property," where the meaning might be "unfailing."

Under this head may be mentioned the double use of words, such as "left" in the same form and sound, but different in meaning. Even where there is no obscurity, the juxtaposition of the same word twice used in two senses is inelegant, *e.g.* (Bain), "He turned to the *left* and *left* the room."

I have known the following slovenly sentence misunderstood: "Our object is that, with the aid of practice, we may sometime arrive at the point where we think eloquence in its most praiseworthy form *to lie*." "To lie" has been supposed to mean "to deceive."

5. Be careful how you use "he," "it," "they," "these," &c. (For "which" see 8.) The ambiguity arising from the use of *he* applying to different persons is well known.

"He told his friend that if *he* did not feel better in half an hour he thought *he* had better return." See (6) for remedy.

Much ambiguity is also caused by excessive use of such phrases as *in this way*, *of this sort*, &c.

"God, foreseeing the disorders of human nature, has given us certain passions and affections which arise from, or whose objects are, these disorders. *Of this sort* are fear, resentment, compassion."

Repeat the noun: "Among these passions and affections are fear &c."

Two distinct uses of *it* may be noted. *It*, when referring to something that precedes, may be called "retrospective;" but when to something that follows, "prospective." In "Avoid indiscriminate charity: *it* is a crime," "it" is retrospective.[6] In "*It* is a crime to give indiscriminately," "it" is prospective.

The prospective "it," if productive of ambiguity, can often be omitted by using the infinitive as a subject: "To give indiscriminately is a crime."

6. Report a speech in the First, not the Third Person, where necessary to avoid ambiguity. Speeches in the third person afford a particular, though very common case, of the general ambiguity mentioned in (5). Instead of "He told his friend that if *he* did not feel better &c.," write "He said to his friend, 'If, *I* (or *you*) don't feel better &c.'"

6 a. Sometimes, where the writer cannot know the exact words, or where the exact words are unimportant, or lengthy and uninteresting, the Third Person is preferable. Thus, where Essex is asking Sir Robert Cecil that Francis Bacon may be appointed Attorney-General, the dialogue is (as it almost always is in Lord Macaulay's writings) in the First Person, *except where it becomes tedious and uninteresting so as to require condensation*, and then it drops into the Third Person:

"Sir Robert *had nothing to say but* that he thought his own abilities equal to the place which he hoped to obtain, and that his father's long services deserved such a mark of gratitude from the Queen."

6 b. Omission of "that" in a speech reported in the Third Person.—Even when a speech is reported in the third person, "that" need not always be inserted before the dependent verb. Thus, instead of "He said that he took it ill that his promises were not believed," we may write, "'He took it ill,' he said, 'that &c.'" This gives a little more life, and sometimes more clearness also.

7. When you use a Participle, as "walking," implying "when," "while," "though," "that," make it clear by the context what is implied.

[6] *It* should refer (1) either to the Noun immediately preceding, or (2) to some Noun superior to all intervening Nouns in emphasis. See (25).

"Republics, in the first instance, are never desired for their own sakes. I do not think they will finally be desired at all, *unaccompanied* by courtly graces and good breeding."

Here there is a little doubt whether the meaning is "*since* they are, or, *if* they are, unaccompanied."

That or when.—"Men *walking* (*that* walk, or *when* they walk) on ice sometimes fall."

It is better to use "men walking" to mean "men *when* they walk." If the relative is meant, use "men that walk," instead of the participle.

(1) "*While* he was } *Walking* on { (1) the road, } he fell." (2) "*Because* he was } { (2) the ice, }

When the participle precedes the subject, it generally implies a cause: "*Seeing* this, he retired." Otherwise it generally has its proper participial meaning, *e.g.* "He retired, *keeping* his face towards us." If there is any ambiguity, write "*on* seeing,"—"*at the same time*, or *while*, keeping."

(1) "*Though* he was} {(1) he nevertheless stood } { his ground."

(2) "*Since* he was } *Struck* with terror, {(2) he rapidly retreated."

(3) "*If* he is } {(3) he will soon retreat."

8. When using the Relative Pronoun, use "who" and "which" where the meaning is "and he, it, &c.," "for he, it, &c." In other cases use "that," if euphony allows.

"I heard this from the inspector, *who* (and he) heard it from the guard *that* travelled with the train."

"Fetch me (all) the books *that* lie on the table, and also the pamphlets, *which* (and these) you will find on the floor."

An adherence to this rule would remove much ambiguity. Thus: "There was a public-house next door, *which* was a great nuisance," means "*and this* (*i.e.* the fact of its being next door) was a great nuisance;" whereas *that* would have meant "Next door was a public-house *that* (*i.e.* the public-house) was a great nuisance." *"Who," "which," &c. introduce a new fact about the antecedent, whereas "that" introduces something without which the antecedent is incomplete or undefined.* Thus, in the first example above, "inspector" is complete in itself, and "who" introduces a new *fact* about him; "guard" is incomplete, and requires "*that* travelled with the train" to complete the meaning.

It is not, and cannot be, maintained that this rule, though observed in Elizabethan English, is observed by our best modern authors. (Probably a general impression that "that" cannot be used to refer to persons has assisted "who" in supplanting "that" as a relative.) But the convenience of the rule is so great that beginners in composition may with advantage adhere to the rule. The following are some of the cases where *who* and *which* are mostly used, contrary to the rule, instead of *that*.

Exceptions:—

(*a*) When the antecedent is defined, *e.g.* by a possessive case, modern English uses *who* instead of *that*. It is rare, though it would be useful,[7] to say "His English friends *that* had not seen him" for "the English friends, or those of his English friends, that had not seen him."

(*b*) *That* sounds ill when separated from its verb and from its antecedents, and emphasized by isolation: "There are many persons *that*, though unscrupulous, are commonly good-tempered, and *that*, if not strongly incited by self-interest, are ready for the most part to think of the interest of their neighbours." Shakespeare frequently uses *who* after *that* when the relative is repeated. See "Shakespearian Grammar," par. 260.

(*c*) If the antecedent is qualified by *that*, the relative must not be *that*. Besides other considerations, the repetition is disagreeable. Addison ridicules such language as "*That* remark *that* I made yesterday is not *that that* I said *that* I regretted *that* I had made."

(*d*) *That* cannot be preceded by a preposition, and hence throws the preposition to the end. "This is the rule *that* I adhere *to*." This is perfectly good English, though sometimes unnecessarily avoided. But, with some prepositions, the construction is harsh and objectionable, *e.g.* "This is the

[7] So useful that, on mature consideration, I am disposed to adopt "that" here and in several of the following exceptional cases.

mark *that* I jumped *beyond*," "Such were the prejudices *that* he rose *above*." The reason is that some of these disyllabic prepositions are used as adverbs, and, when separated from their nouns, give one the impression that they are used as adverbs.

(*e*) After pronominal adjectives used for personal pronouns, modern English prefers *who*. "There are many, others, several, those, *who* can testify &c."

(*f*) After *that* used as a conjunction there is sometimes a dislike to use *that* as a relative. See (*c*).

9. Do not use redundant "and" before "which."[8]

"I gave him a very interesting book for a present, *and which* cost me five shillings."

In short sentences the absurdity is evident, but in long sentences it is less evident, and very common.

"A petition was presented for rescinding that portion of the bye-laws which permits application of public money to support sectarian schools over which ratepayers have no control, this being a violation of the principle of civil and religious liberty, *and which* the memorialists believe would provoke a determined and conscientious resistance."

Here *which* ought grammatically to refer to "portion" or "schools." But it seems intended to refer to "violation." Omit "and," or repeat "a violation" before "which," or turn the sentence otherwise.

10. Equivalents for Relative.

*(*a*) Participle.*—"Men *thirsting* (for 'men *that thirst*') for revenge are not indifferent to plunder." The objection to the participle is that here, as often, it creates a little ambiguity. The above sentence may mean, "men, *when* they thirst," or "*though* they thirst," as well as "men *that* thirst." Often however there is no ambiguity: "I have documents *proving* this conclusively."

*(*b*) Infinitive.*—Instead of "He was the first *that* entered" you can write "*to* enter;" for "He is not a man *who* will act dishonestly," "*to* act." This equivalent cannot often be used.

*(*c*) Whereby, wherein, &c.,* can sometimes be used for "by *which*," "in *which*," so as to avoid a harsh repetition of "*which*." "The means *whereby* this may be effected." But this use is somewhat antiquated.

*(*d*) If.*—"The man *that* does not care for music is to be pitied" can be written (though not so forcibly), "*If* a man does not care for music, he is to be pitied." It is in long sentences that this equivalent will be found most useful.

*(*e*) And this.*—"He did his best, *which* was all that could be expected," can be written, "*and this* was all that, &c."

*(*f*) What.*—"Let me repeat *that which*[9] you ought to know, that *that which* is worth doing is worth doing well." "Let me repeat, *what* you ought to know, that *what* is worth doing is worth doing well."

*(*g*) Omission of Relative.*—It is sometimes thought ungrammatical to omit the relative, as in "The man (that) you speak of." On the contrary, *that* when an object (not when a subject) may be omitted, wherever the antecedent and the subject of the relative sentence are brought into juxtaposition by the omission.

10 a'. Repeat the Antecedent in some new form, where there is any ambiguity. This is particularly useful after a negative: "He said that he would not even hear me, *which* I confess I had expected." Here the meaning may be, "I had expected that he would," or "that he would not, hear me." Write, "*a refusal*, or, *a favour*, that I confess I had expected." See (38).

11. Use particular for general terms.—This is a most important rule. Instead of "I have neither the necessaries of life nor the means of procuring them," write (if you can *with truth*), "I have not a crust of bread, nor a penny to buy one."

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[8] Of course "and which" may be used where "which" precedes.

[9] "That which," where *that* is an *object*, *e.g.* "then (set forth) *that which* is worse," *St. John* ii. 10, is rare in modern English.

CAUTION.—There is a danger in this use. The meaning is vividly expressed but sometimes may be exaggerated or imperfect. *Crust of bread* may be an exaggeration; on the other hand, if the speaker is destitute not only of bread, but also of shelter and clothing, then *crust of bread* is an imperfect expression of the meaning.

In philosophy and science, where the language ought very often to be inclusive and brief, general and not particular terms must be used.

11 a. Avoid Verbal Nouns where Verbs can be used instead. The disadvantage of the use of Verbal Nouns is this, that, unless they are immediately preceded by prepositions, they are sometimes liable to be confounded with participles. The following is an instance of an excessive use of Verbal Nouns:

"The pretended confession of the secretary was only collusion to lay the jealousies of the king's *favouring* popery, which still hung upon him, notwithstanding his *writing* on the Revelation, and *affecting* to enter on all occasions into controversy, *asserting* in particular that the Pope was Antichrist."

Write "notwithstanding that he wrote and affected &c."

12. Use a particular Person instead of a class.

"What is the splendour of *the greatest monarch* compared with the beauty of *a flower*?" "What is the splendour of Solomon compared with the beauty of a daisy?"

Under this head may come the forcible use of Noun for Adjective: "This fortress is *weakness* itself."

An excess of this use is lengthy and pedantically bombastic, *e.g.*, the following paraphrase for "in every British colony:"—"under Indian palm-groves, amid Australian gum-trees, in the shadow of African mimosas, and beneath Canadian pines."

13. Use Metaphor instead of literal statement.

"The ship *ploughs* the sea" is clearer than "the ship *cleaves* the sea," and shorter than "the ship *cleaves* the sea *as a plough cleaves the land*."

Of course there are some subjects for which Metaphor should not be used. See (14 *a*) and (14 *b*).

14. Do not confuse Metaphor.

"In a moment the thunderbolt was upon them, *deluging* their country with invaders."

The following is attributed to Sir Boyle Roche: "Mr. Speaker, I smell a rat, I see him brewing in the air; but, mark me, I shall yet nip him in the bud."

Some words, once metaphorical, have ceased to be so regarded. Hence many good writers say "*under* these *circumstances*" instead of "*in* these circumstances."

An excessive regard for disused metaphor savours of pedantry: disregard is inelegant. Write, not, "*unparalleled* complications," but "*unprecedented* complications;" and "*he threw light on* obscurities," instead of "*he unravelled* obscurities."

14 a. Do not introduce literal statement immediately after Metaphor.

"He was the father of Chemistry, and brother to the Earl of Cork."

"He was a very thunderbolt of war,
And was lieutenant to the Earl of Mar."

14 b. Do not use poetic metaphor to illustrate a prosaic subject. Thus, we may say "a poet *soars*," or even, though rarely, "a nation *soars* to greatness," but you could not say "Consols *soared to* 94-1/2." Even commonplace subjects may be illustrated by metaphor: for it is a metaphor, and quite unobjectionable, to say "Consols *mounted*, or *jumped* to 94-1/2." But commonplace subjects must be illustrated by metaphor that is commonplace.

ORDER OF WORDS IN A SENTENCE

15. Emphatic words must stand in emphatic positions; i.e. for the most part, at the beginning or at the end of the sentence. This rule occasionally supersedes the common rules about position. Thus, the place for an adverb, as a rule, should be between the subject and verb: "He *quickly* left the room;" but if *quickly* is to be emphatic, it must come at the beginning or end, as in "I told him to leave the room slowly, but he left *quickly*."

Adjectives, in clauses beginning with "if" and "though," often come at the beginning for emphasis: "*Insolent* though he was, he was silenced at last."

15 a. Unemphatic words must, as a rule, be kept from the end of the sentence. It is a common fault to break this rule by placing a short and unemphatic predicate at the end of a long sentence.

"To know some Latin, even if it be nothing but a few Latin roots, *is useful*." Write, "It is useful, &c."

So "the evidence proves how kind to his inferiors *he is*."

Often, where an adjective or auxiliary verb comes at the end, the addition of an emphatic adverb justifies the position, *e.g.* above, "is *very* useful," "he has *invariably* been."

A short "chippy" ending, even though emphatic, is to be avoided. It is abrupt and unrhythmical, *e.g.* "The soldier, transfixed with the spear, *writhed*." We want a *longer* ending, "fell writhing to the ground," or, "writhed in the agonies of death." A "chippy" ending is common in bad construing from Virgil.

Exceptions.—Prepositions and pronouns attached to emphatic words need not be moved from the end; *e.g.* "He does no harm that I hear *of*." "Bear witness how I loved *him*."

N.B. In all styles, especially in letter-writing, a final emphasis must not be so frequent as to become obtrusive and monotonous.

15 b. An interrogation sometimes gives emphasis. "No one can doubt that the prisoner, had he been really guilty, would have shown some signs of remorse," is not so emphatic as "Who can doubt, Is it possible to doubt, &c.?"

Contrast "No one ever names Wentworth without thinking of &c." with "But Wentworth,—who ever names him without thinking of those harsh dark features, ennobled by their expression into more than the majesty of an antique Jupiter?"

16. The subject, if unusually emphatic, should often be removed from the beginning of the sentence. The beginning of the sentence is an emphatic position, though mostly not so emphatic as the end. Therefore the principal subject of a sentence, being emphatic, and being wanted early in the sentence to tell us what the sentence is about, comes as a rule, at or near the beginning: "*Thomas* built this house."

Hence, since the beginning is the *usual* place for the subject, if we want to emphasize "Thomas" *unusually*, we must remove "Thomas" from the beginning: "This house was built by *Thomas*," or "It was *Thomas* that built this house."

Thus, the emphasis on "conqueror" is not quite so strong in "*A mere conqueror* ought not to obtain from us the reverence that is due to the great benefactors of mankind," as in "We ought not to bestow the reverence that is due to the great benefactors of mankind, *upon a mere conqueror*." Considerable, but less emphasis and greater smoothness (19) will be obtained by writing the sentence thus: "We ought not to bestow upon a mere conqueror &c."

Where the same subject stands first in several consecutive sentences, it rises in emphasis, and need not be removed from the beginning, even though unusual emphasis be required:

"The captain was the life and soul of the expedition. *He* first pointed out the possibility of advancing; *he* warned them of the approaching scarcity of provisions; *he* showed how they might replenish their exhausted stock &c."

17. The object is sometimes placed before the verb for emphasis. This is most common in antithesis. "*Jesus* I know, and *Paul* I know; but who are ye?" "*Some* he imprisoned, *others* he put to death."

Even where there is no antithesis the inversion is not uncommon:

"Military *courage*, the boast of the sottish German, of the frivolous and prating Frenchman, of the romantic and arrogant Spaniard, he neither possesses nor values."

This inversion sometimes creates ambiguity in poetry, *e.g.* "The son the father slew," and must be sparingly used in prose.

Sometimes the position of a word may be considered appropriate by some, and inappropriate by others, according to different interpretations of the sentence. Take as an example, "Early in the morning the nobles and gentlemen who attended on the king assembled in the great hall of the castle; and here they began to talk of what a dreadful storm it had been the night before. But Macbeth could scarcely understand what they said, for he was thinking of something worse." The last sentence has been amended by Professor Bain into "*What they said*, Macbeth could scarcely understand." But there appears to be an antithesis between the guiltless nobles who can think about the weather, and the guilty Macbeth who cannot. Hence, "what they said" ought not, and "Macbeth" ought, to be emphasized: and therefore "Macbeth" ought to be retained at the beginning of the sentence.

The same author alters, "The praise of judgment Virgil has justly contested with him, but his invention remains yet unrivalled," into "Virgil has justly contested with him the praise of judgment, but no one has yet rivalled his invention"—an alteration which does not seem to emphasize sufficiently the antithesis between what had been 'contested,' on the one hand, and what remained as yet 'unrivalled' on the other.

More judiciously Professor Bain alters, "He that tells a lie is not sensible how great a task he undertakes; for he must be forced to invent twenty more to maintain one," into "for, to maintain one, he must invent twenty more," putting the emphatic words in their emphatic place, at the end.

18. Where several words are emphatic, make it clear which is the most emphatic. Thus, in "The state was made, under the pretence of serving it, in reality the prize of their contention to each of these opposite parties," it is unpleasantly doubtful whether the writer means (1) *state* or (2) *parties* to be emphatic.

If (1), "As for the *state*, these two parties, under the pretence of serving it, converted it into a prize for their contention." If (2), write, "Though served in profession, the state was in reality converted into a prize for their contention by these two *parties*." In (1) *parties* is subordinated, in (2) *state*.

Sometimes the addition of some intensifying word serves to emphasize. Thus, instead of "To effect this they used all devices," we can write "To effect this they used *every conceivable device*." So, if we want to emphasize fidelity in "The business will task your skill and fidelity," we can write "Not only your skill *but also* your fidelity." This, however, sometimes leads to exaggerations. See (2).

Sometimes antithesis gives emphasis, as in "You *do* not know this, but you *shall* know it." Where antithesis cannot be used, the emphasis must be expressed by turning the sentence, as "I *will make you* know it," or by some addition, as "You shall *hereafter* know it."

19. Words should be as near as possible to the words with which they are grammatically connected. See Paragraphs 20 to 29. For exceptions see 30.

20. Adverbs should be placed next to the words they are intended to affect. When unemphatic, adverbs come between the subject and the verb, or, if the tense is compound, between the parts of the compound tense: "He *quickly* left the room;" "He has *quickly* left the room;" but, when emphatic, after the verb: "He left, or has left, the room *quickly*."[10] When such a sentence as the latter is followed by a present participle, there arises ambiguity. "I told him to go slowly, but he left

[10] Sometimes the emphatic Adverb comes at the beginning, and causes the transposition of an Auxiliary Verb, "*Gladly* do I consent."

the room *quickly*, dropping the purse on the floor." Does *quickly* here modify *left* or *dropping*? The remedy[11] is, to give the adverb its unemphatic place, "He *quickly* left the room, dropping &c.," or else to avoid the participle, thus: "He *quickly* dropped the purse and left the room," or "He dropped the purse and *quickly* left the room."

21. "Only" requires careful use. The strict[12] rule is, that "only" should be placed before the word affected by it.

The following is ambiguous:

"The heavens are not open to the faithful *only* at intervals."

The best rule is to avoid placing "only" between two emphatic words, and to avoid using "only" where "alone" can be used instead.

In strictness perhaps the three following sentences:

(1) He *only* beat three,

(2) He beat *only* three,

(3) He beat three *only*, ought to be explained, severally, thus:

(1) He did no more than beat, did not kill, three.

(2) He beat no more than three.

(3) He beat three, and that was all he did. (Here *only* modifies the whole of the sentence and depreciates the action.)

But the best authors sometimes transpose the word. "He *only* lived" ought to mean "he did not die or make any great sacrifice;" but "He *only* lived but till he was a man" (*Macbeth*, v. 8. 40) means "He lived *only* till he was a man." Compare also, "Who *only* hath immortality."

Only at the beginning of a statement = *but*. "I don't like to importune you, *only* I know you'll forgive me." Before an imperative it diminishes the favour asked: "*Only* listen to me." This use of *only* is mostly confined to letters.

Very often, *only* at the beginning of a sentence is used for *alone*: "*Only* ten came," "*Only* Cæsar approved." *Alone* is less ambiguous. The ambiguity of *only* is illustrated by such a sentence as, "Don't hesitate to bring a few friends of yours to shoot on my estate at any time. *Only* five (fifteen) came yesterday," which might mean, "I don't mind a *few*; *only* don't bring so many as *fifteen*;" or else "Don't hesitate to bring a few *more*; no more than *five* came yesterday." In conversation, ambiguity is prevented by emphasis; but in a letter, *only* thus used might cause unfortunate mistakes. Write "Yesterday *only* five came," if you mean "no more than five."

22. When "not only" precedes "but also," see that each is followed by the same part of speech.

"He *not only* gave me advice *but also* help" is wrong. Write "He gave me, *not only* advice, *but also* help." On the other hand, "He *not only* gave me a grammar, *but also* lent me a dictionary," is right. Take an instance. "He spoke *not only* forcibly *but also* tastefully (adverbs), and this too, *not only* before a small audience, *but also* in (prepositions) a large public meeting, and his speeches were *not only* successful, *but also* (adjective) worthy of success."

23. "At least," "always," and other adverbial adjuncts, sometimes produce ambiguity.

"I think you will find my Latin exercise, *at all events*, as good as my cousin's." Does this mean (1) "my Latin exercise, though not perhaps my other exercises;" or (2), "Though not very good, yet, at all events, as good as my cousin's"? Write for (1), "My Latin exercise, at all events, you will find &c." and for (2), "I think you will find my Latin exercise as good as my cousin's, at all events."

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[11] Of course punctuation will remove the ambiguity; but it is better to express oneself clearly, as far as possible, independently of punctuation.

[12] Professor Bain.

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